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きづきあきら
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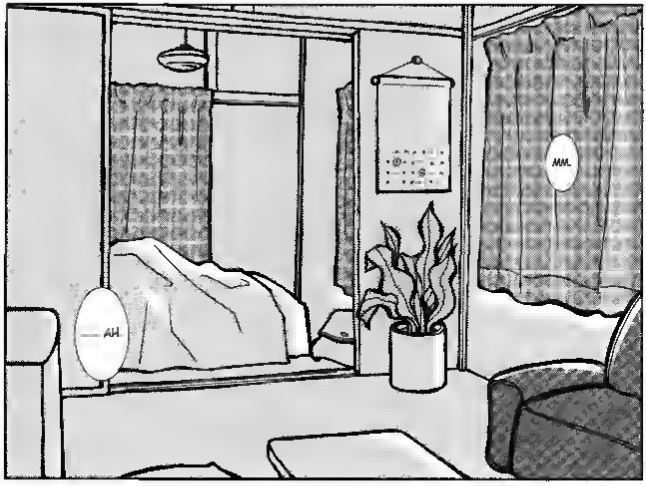
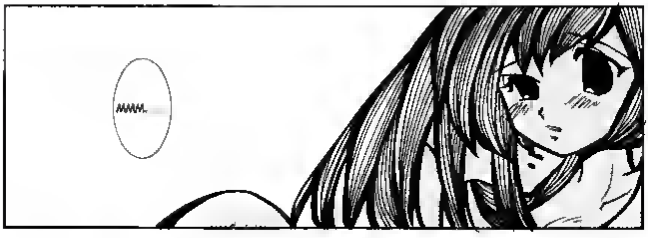
Needles and Oranges

Kizuki Akira

Needles and Oranges

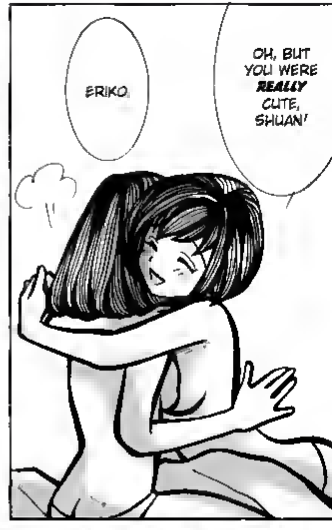

MM.
AH.


MMM.

HAA.

.....
HEEHEE
I'M STILL A LITTLE SHY.

*Note. <> denote dialogue in Chinese.



RUO SHUAN** AND I

HAVE BEEN SEEING EACH OTHER FOR MONTHS EVEN THOUGH WE DON'T SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE

WE

**Note. "Guo1 Shuang3" in romanized Chinese.

BUT WE DON'T NEED WORDS TO COMMUNICATE.
AND WE KNOW WE LOVE EACH OTHER DEEPLY.
WORDS CAN ACTUALLY RUIN THINGS SOMETIMES,

SO WE'RE VERY HAPPY

YOU'RE DELUDING YOURSELF.

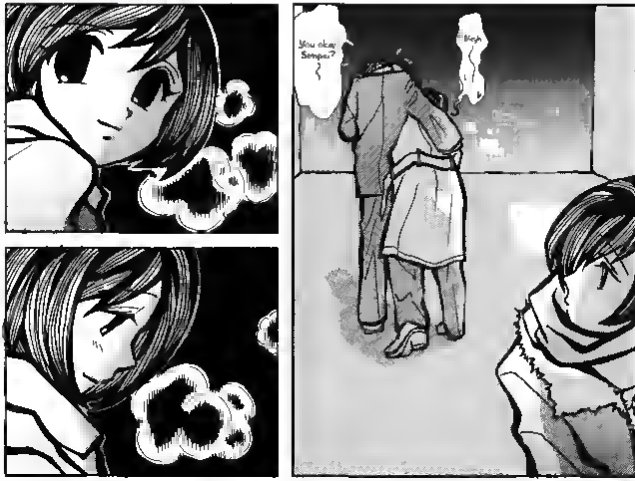
YOU'RE
WHY WOULD YOU SAY A THING LIKE THAT?!
HORRIBLE!
Awww
BECAUSE
...
!
YOU NEED TO WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE, ERIKO.

EEK.....
.... NO.
DOES SHE KNOW THAT?
YOU HAVE BOTH A GIRLFRIEND AND A BOYFRIEND, ERIKO-CHAN.

OUCH!
STOP IT, SHUU-CHAN
.....THAT'S WHY
.....YOU WANT TO TIE ME UP WHILE WE DO IT? AGAIN?
YEAH
YOU WANT TO DO IT EVERY TIME NOW YOU KNOW THAT?
.....SHUU-CHAN, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING A LITTLE WEIRD LATELY

I WAS JUST SEEING HOW YOU REACTED TO THINGS, AND SLOWLY LETTING YOU GET USED TO THEM.
LATELY?
OHH... NO, NO
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS
I DON'T LIKE PAIN.
LET'S STOP THIS.
.... SO,
IF YOU HONESTLY DON'T WANT TO DO IT, WE'LL STOP.
OF COURSE!
CAN I USE THE NEEDLES TODAY?

……
……YEAH.



SHUAN WAS TOTALLY PLASTERED THE FIRST TIME I MET HER TOO

WHUMP
WHAT'S WRONG? ARE YOU SICK?
<Thank you!>
<I am fine!>
SHE'S CUTE.
<He is drunk...>
♪
♫

THOUGH IT MIGHT JUST HAVE BEEN DRUNKEN PASSION ON SHUAN'S PART...

I WAS IN LOVE--WHAT MORE NEED I SAY?

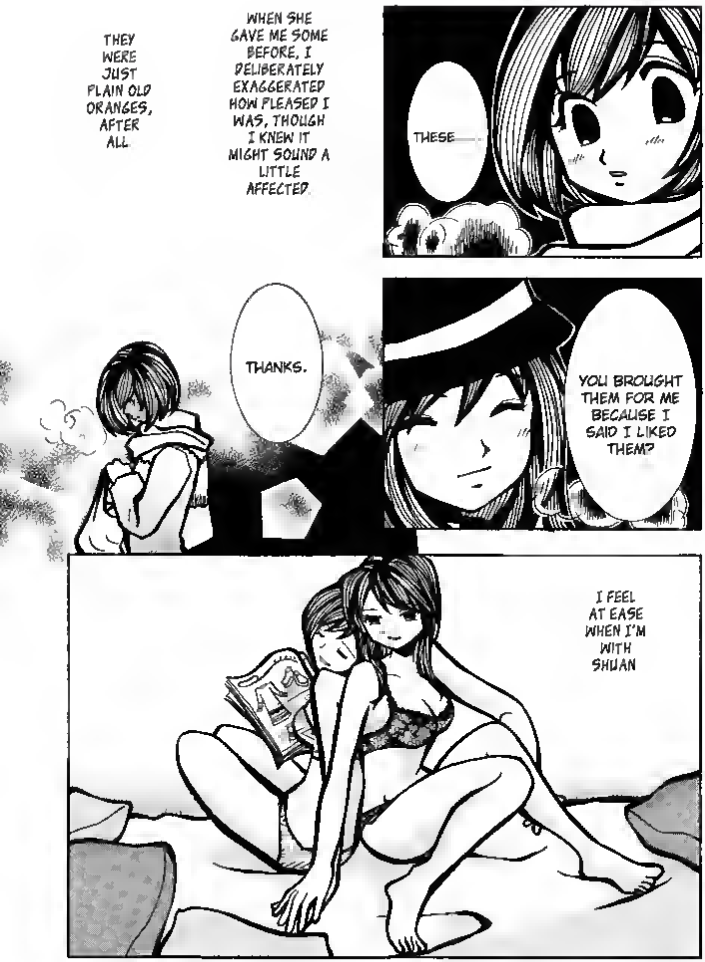
AFTER THAT, TIME PASSED IN A FLASH.

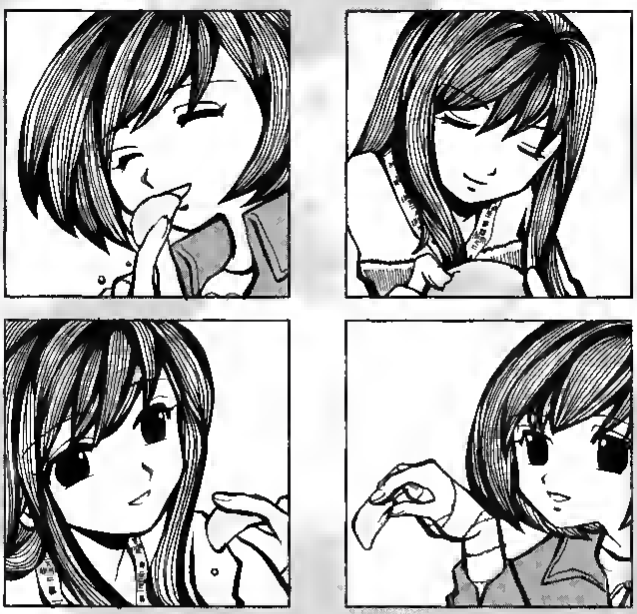
AREN'T YOU COLD? WHAT'S WRONG?

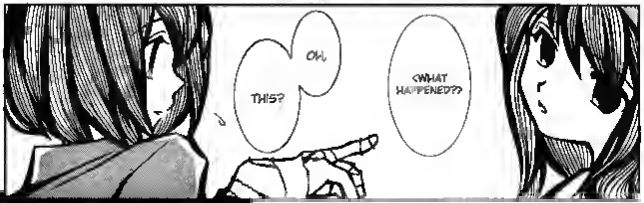
<THESE ARE FOR YOU.>

<PLEASE EAT THEM >

SHUAN!


THEY WERE JUST PLAIN OLD ORANGES, AFTER ALL.
WHEN SHE GAVE ME SOME BEFORE, I DELIBERATELY EXAGGERATED HOW PLEASED I WAS, THOUGH I KNEW IT MIGHT SOUND A LITTLE AFFECTED.
THESE...
THANKS.
YOU BROUGHT THEM FOR ME BECAUSE I SAID I LIKED THEM?
I FEEL AT EASE WHEN I'M WITH SHUAN


IN THIS RELATIONSHIP, ALL WE NEED TO DO IS LOVE EACH OTHER
THERE'S NO CALCULATION OR ANXIETY



I'M A LOT MORE WORRIED ABOUT HER, THOUGH.

THAT'S BEEN BOTHERING ME FOR A LONG TIME
AND SHE ALWAYS WEARS HIDEOUSLY EXPENSIVE THINGS WHERE DOES SHE GET THE MONEY FOR THEM?
SHUAN ALWAYS LEAVES AT NIGHT
TAKE CARE!

YOU CERTAINLY DON'T SEE MANY JAPANESE GIRLS WHO ARE THAT HONEST ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS THESE DAYS, HM?
...AND SHE
WENT OUT OF HER WAY TO BRING ME SOME AND THEN WAITED FOR ME THERE.
IT KINDA MAKES ME FEEL... LIKE WE REALLY LOVE EACH OTHER
I WAS JUST THINKING... THAT IT SOUNDED LIKE YOU TWO WERE PLAYING HOUSE.
YOU JUST SMILED!
OH, SORRY
YOU'RE HORRIBLE!

SHUU-CHAN,
WE'RE NOT IN BED RIGHT NOW, SO DON'T BE MEAN——!
WE UNDER-STAND EACH OTHER REALLY WELL...
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!

BUT I UNDERSTOOD THAT EVEN LESS.

I COULD READ THE FALTERING "GOODBYE" SHE'D WRITTEN IN JAPANESE AT THE END,

IT WAS ALL IN FOREIGN WRITING

THAT BROUGHT IT HOME TO ME THAT I DIDN'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT HER
BUT I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE I SHOULD LOOK.
I WALKED AROUND LOOKING FOR HER EVERY DAY AFTER THAT.

"playing house"
"It sounded like you two were"

DON'T LOSE HEART, ERIKO.....
STOP IT.....
YOU AND SHUAN UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, RIGHT? EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE, THEN
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST ASKED IF I COULD TIE YOU UP?
.....ERIKO
IT HURT SO MUCH I WAS SO SCARED
.....
I REMEMBER IT WELL.....

BUT AFTER A WHILE, I COULDN'T TELL IF IT WAS PAIN OR PLEASURE...
YOU WERE LIKE A STRANGER THEN, SHUU-CHAN...
I WAS AFRAID YOU'D HATE ME.
WAS REALLY SCARY FOR ME
SHOWING YOU THAT SIDE OF ME
BUT THAT WAS THE REAL ME TOO.
RIGHT.

BUT I WANTED YOU TO KNOW THE REAL ME
YOU AND SHUAN ONLY SHARED THE GOOD TIMES
AND IT WAS BECAUSE YOU WERE USING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER AS AN EXCUSE TO AVOID HER PAIN
I THINK IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR TWO PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE A PERFECT UNDERSTANDING EVEN IF THEY EXCHANGE A MILLION WORDS.
AND THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER.

THE NEXT TIME YOU SEE HER,
YOU HAVE TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO TRULY GET TO KNOW HER EVEN IF THERE ARE SOME HARDSHIPS INVOLVED
.....IF YOU LOVE HER

ERIKO.
KISHO STORE
IN

SHUU-CHAN ASKED A FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT TO TRANSLATE THE LETTER FOR ME

THE LETTER CONTAINED SHUAN'S ADDRESS IN CHINA. IT SAID THAT SHE WAS IN JAPAN BECAUSE HER FATHER, A CHINESE NATIONAL WHO LIVED ABROAD, WAS HERE ON BUSINESS.

...IT TOLD OF A SHUAN WHO WAS ALMOST THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THE ONE I HAD ARBITRARILY COME UP WITH.

SO SHE WASN'T SELLING HERSELF OR ANYTHING...

OH, I ALREADY KNEW THAT IT'D BE HARD TO DO THAT IF YOU COULDN'T EVEN SPEAK THE LANGUAGE.

BUT SHE ALWAYS WORE SUCH EXPENSIVE CLOTHES...

ERIKO, WOULD YOU HAVE THOUGHT THE SAME IF SHE HAD BEEN AN AMERICAN?

...

THAT SHOWS YOUR PREJUDICE AGAINST ASIANS, YOU KNOW.

AM I WRONG?

—I'VE BEEN WONDERING THIS FOR A WHILE—
Want to go somewhere you can read over it at your leisure?
HMM?
BUT WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO HELP ME AND SHUAN, INSTEAD OF GETTING MAD ABOUT US?
I JUST WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY, ERIKO
WELL, I HAVE A HUGE ADVANTAGE OVER HER RIGHT NOW, SO YOU COULD SAY I'M JUST SHOWING HER SOME MERCY—
I'M NOT DELIBERATELY TRYING TO HELP YOU TWO GET BACK TOGETHER, Y'KNOW?

IF I WANT TO SERIOUSLY RESPOND TO THE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT ME
I HAVE TO KNOW MY FEELINGS ONCE MORE
SHUU-CHAN SAID, "I DON'T FEEL LIKE I'M LOSING, SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. MAKE YOUR CHOICE FREELY," AND SMILED
I'VE STARTED LEARNING CHINESE
<Hello?>
<Long time no see?>
IT'S STILL ALL GIBBERISH TO ME, THOUGH
THIS SUMMER,
I'M GOING TO THE CITY SHE WROTE IN THE LETTER, EVEN THOUGH I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT'S CALLED

YET SOMEONE I HOLD DEAR-- AWAITS ME THERE
BECAUSE A STRANGER--

Needles and Oranges

This was the first work I ever sent in to a contest. I submitted it for the Four Seasons Award (Monthly Afternoon's award for new artists) and received an Honorable Mention.

I can't believe they let it through... The truth is, I had just given birth and was unemployed. I forced myself to draw it in just under a month, keeping one eye on the crying baby the whole time. It's embarrassing because I did a lot of it on sheer momentum. But it was my ticket to doing work for commercially-published manga magazines, so it holds a lot of memories for me. It was my first time using B4-size* paper like the pros (I used A4-size** for my doujinshi), so the paper looked huge to me. I worked really hard to fill the whole page, I don't know if that memory is more nostalgic or embarrassing for me.

Note: *Around 9.9 × 13.9 inches
**Around 8.3 × 11.7 inches

死の聲

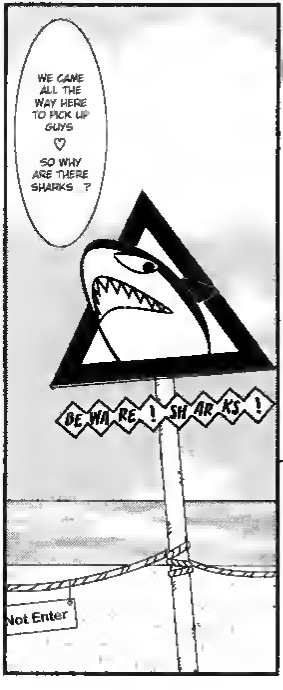
家族で相方の瀬元騎駝さんにコンテとかネームと呼ばれるものを切ってもらって、作品を交換し合って仕上げたものです。お互いがふたん描かないようなものを描いてみようということで試したんですが、おもしろかった。自分が一から思い付かない内容なだけに、ちょっと距離を置いて鑑賞できるし割と今でも気に入っています。

世紀末だったので、そのような雰囲気が色々な所で蔓延していた時期でした。

A Fun Summer Vacation

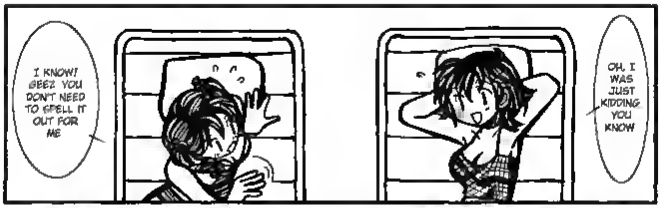
There was a time when I was addicted to teen magazines. Their content feels contrived to me. I don't know how many girls take them seriously, but I feel like they really convey the carefree (well, they do have things they worry about, but it's on a different level) feel of being a teenage girl. I enjoyed reading them.

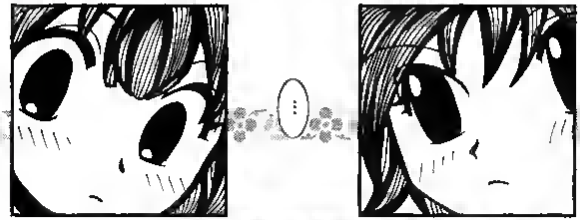
A Fun Summer Vacation



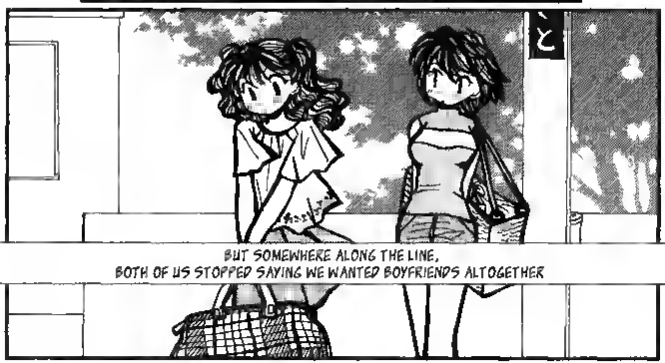
I'M HAVING FUN JUST TAKING IT EASY Y'KNOW?
WELL, HEY SUNBATHING ON THE HOTEL'S VERANDA IS GOOD TOO RIGHT?
WHAT?
BUT YOU SAID THIS WAS THE YEAR YOU WERE FINALLY GOING TO FIND A BOYFRIEND TOO TAEKO.
WHOA!
WHAT'S WITH THIS SURVEY?
WELL IF YOU'RE OKAY WITH IT I GUESS I AM TOO...
"WHAT IF YOU COULD BE A GUY FOR A DAY...?"
PETIT SWAN
GACK! HAHAHA THE TOP RESPONSE IS "PICK UP A GIRL AND HAVE SEX!"
THAT'S REALLY TWO GIRLS TOGETHER, Y'KNOW~? YOU SURE ABOUT THAT~?

I'D DEFINITELY DO IT WITH YOU IF I WERE A GUY THOUGH.
IF THEY ASKED GUYS DO YOU THINK THE TOP RESPONSE WOULD BE "HAVE SEX WITH A GUY"?
HUH?!
'CAUSE YOU'RE SERIOUSLY CUTE MIKI
NO WAY NO WAY I hope.
HMM. BUT IF I WAS DOING IT WITH YOU I MIGHT WANT TO DO IT 24/7 TOO, TAEKO.
HAHAHA
HAHA
HAHAHA


I KNOW! BEEZ YOU DON'T NEED TO SPELL IT OUT FOR ME
OH, I WAS JUST KIDDING YOU KNOW


...

AT THE END OF THE SUMMER AGAIN
Forget anything?
Uhh- uuh.
AND SO WE WERE STILL BOYFRIEND-LESS


BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE,
BOTH OF US STOPPED SAYING WE WANTED BOYFRIENDS ALTOGETHER

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NEEDLES AND ORANGES

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